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151348Z May 05

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 001301

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/14/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#), [MASS](#), [PTER](#), [KJUS](#), [YM](#), [COUNTER](#), [TERRORISM](#)

SUBJECT: SALEH AND AMBASSADOR DISCUSS KORAN DESECRATION  
ALLEGATIONS, FMF, AND AL-HOUTHI REBELLION

Classified By: Ambassador Thomas C. Krajewski for reasons 1.4 b and d.

1. (C) Summary. President Saleh convoked Ambassador for a brief meeting May 14. The President and Ambassador discussed the Koran desecration allegations, President Saleh's planned visit to Washington, and the status of ROYG requests for M-113 armored personnel carriers. True to his nature, Saleh claimed that fighting the second al-Houthi rebellion has set the ROYG back 50 billion YR (approximately 262 million USD) and asked for at least partial USG compensation, claiming as he has before, that he fought al-Houthi on behalf of the U.S. and the GWOT.

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Koran Desecration Allegations  
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2. (C) Ambassador assured President Saleh that the USG considers the recent allegations that Guantanamo interrogators desecrated the Holy Koran to be an extremely serious matter. Ambassador noted Secretary Rice and SecDef's official repudiation of the alleged behavior. The U.S. Military is conducting immediate and complete investigations.

Such an act, continued Ambassador, would be abhorrent, repugnant, and contrary to the fundamental belief in freedom and respect for all religions upon which our nation was founded. If proved true, Ambassador told Saleh that those responsible for this deviant behavior would be held accountable. Saleh thanked Ambassador for his strong stance on this issue, and noted that ROYG security forces would not permit demonstrations to occur in Yemen. (Note: On 15 May official daily 'al-Thawra' headlined a front page story on this meeting with Saleh's "Strong Condemnation of the Desecration of the Holy Koran in Guantanamo. End Note.)

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Saleh's Visit to Washington: Must be 'Official'  
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3. (C) The President inquired about scheduling for his visit to Washington to meet President Bush, reiterating that he prefers to travel before Ramadan begins in October. Ambassador explained that exact timing would not likely be pinned down until late in the summer, but that the White House was aiming for late September in recognition of Ramadan. Responding to Saleh's question on if his visit would be "working or official," Ambassador said it would be an "official working visit." The President frowned, insisting, "it must be official." Ambassador explained that the details were yet to be worked out but that usually an official working visit includes an invitation to Blair House and a working lunch and meeting with the President, which appeared to satisfy Saleh.

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Saleh: I want My M-113s  
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4. (C) Saleh asked for a progress report on ROYG M-113 orders. Ambassador responded that OMC is working with the Ministry of Interior to complete the details for approximately 30 M-113 U.S. APCs from excess defense acquisitions available, possibly more, in Germany. Ambassador confirmed that the U.S. would cover the shipping costs. Saleh reached into his pocket saying, "I will pay for the shipping if you can get them here faster." Saleh added that the ROYG has also bought 600 Russian BMP-2, similar to the M-113. (Note: The major delay has been MOI submission of official request paperwork, finally received at the Embassy today, May 15. As for the 600 Russian APCs, OMC is only aware of ROYG orders for 200 Russian and 100 Ukrainian BMP-2s. End Note.)

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Saleh, Again: USG Should Compensate for al-Houthi losses  
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5. (C) Saleh raised the costs to the ROYG of fighting the second al-Houthi insurrection, claiming (as he has often in the past) that he fought al-Houthi, son and father, on behalf of the U.S. and as part of the GWOT. Pitching for USG funds to partially compensate for expenditures of funds and

materiel in Sadaa, Saleh claimed the ROYG has spent a whopping 50 billion YR (approximately 262 Million USD) fighting "your fight." The U.S., insisted the President, has an obligation to pay for some of this damage, "or would you prefer we allow the al-Houthis to chant 'Death to America' on the streets of Sanaa? If you don't care," added the Yemeni President, "then I'll let them say what they want," but warned "it could lead to real chaos." President Saleh also asked Ambassador to weigh in with the UK over reported British objections to the use of Central Security Forces (CSF-CTU) in Saada.

16. (S) Comment: Saleh ended the meeting abruptly, but not uncharacteristically, with a "bye, bye!" before Ambassador could respond to his last request, or raise the issue of needed USG access to detained AQ cell leader Kanan. Saleh did not raise any particularly urgent or new issues. Krajewski